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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how the concept of caring relates to the pedagogical imagination of North American and Argentinean preservice teachers. It is guided by the assumption that pedagogical imaginations about schooling, manifested in the form of spoken, written, and drawn expressions, metaphors, and images, may help in the process of grasping students' ideas about caring and their sensitivities and inclinations. Section 1 reviews the works of Nel Noddings, who developed an extensive framework around the concept of caring and its pedagogical values. Section 2 presents the methods used in this project. Weekly classroom observations of 10 groups of Argentinean and American preservice elementary teachers were conducted over 6 months. Faculty, administrators, and students were interviewed, and students completed questionnaires. The researcher observed workshops in which students explored pedagogical imaginations. Sections 3 and 4 report results and conclusions. Many participants in both countries imagined ideal classrooms in traditional patterns. Their ideal classroom was mainly a response to their diagnosis of current classrooms as chaotic spaces deeply embedded in gender dynamics. The notions of caring derived from Noddings' framework were very close to the functions of caring in the pedagogical imagination of preservice teachers in both countries. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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Comparing Pedagogical Imaginations in Teacher Education

Paper presented at the AERA annual conference,
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Introduction

This paper presents an exploration of the concept of caring and how it relates to the *pedagogical imagination* of North American and Argentinean pre-service teacher education students. In this paper, pedagogical imagination is understood as operating at two inter-connected yet separate levels. At the first pedagogical imagination, indicates the body of ideas, images, metaphors and concepts developed by teacher education students in their efforts to make sense of the current structures of schools. In a second level pedagogical imaginations also describe these future teachers' thoughts, representations and conceptions of "ideal classrooms" in Argentina and the USA.

This comparison of the role of caring in the pedagogical imaginations of future teachers seeks to address my concerns not only as a researcher studying the field of teacher education but also as a teacher educator. As a researcher, I seek to gain better understanding of the concept of caring, which in recent educational literature and pedagogical initiatives has been proposed as a key component for reforming and transforming education (Noddings, 1999; Oakes and Lipton, 1999). Additionally, previous studies (Fischman, 1998, 1999, and 2000) have shown the centrality of the concept of caring in the pedagogical imagination of teacher education students in Argentina.

The main theoretical assumption guiding this project is that "pedagogical imaginations" about schooling, manifested in the form of spoken, written, drawing expressions, metaphors, and images, may help in the process of grasping students' ideas

about caring as well as their sensitivities and inclinations which are integral to their future performance as professionals of education.

In short, in this work I am advocating for the recognition of the importance of intuition, images, metaphors, synchronicity and less rational and non-analytic forms of knowing which are usually omitted in educational research as irrelevant or non-scientific because they are not easily quantifiable. This advocacy is based also on recommendations and findings from an increasing number of researchers, who are pointing out to the fact that the knowledge used and produced by teachers is not only –nor even primarily- cognitive or evaluative. emotions, dispositions, bias, fantasies, and stereotypes are an integral part of it (Elbaz, 1991; Ellsworth, 1997).

As a teacher-educator I am also concerned with offering future teachers opportunities to reflect about the profession they are about to enter, to imagine the world of schooling as an open-ended territory, in the form of exploration of 'what-if' scenarios. This exploration thus uses narrative and discursive strategies in which images, figures, metaphors, themes, topics, theories, and stereotypes are resources that can be mobilized to corroborate, undermine, or reinvent prevailing representations of schooling.

These concerns have oriented my qualitative exploration of the pedagogical imagination of teacher education students in a comparative project. During this process, I have developed a method of inquiry which attempts to complement the data gathered from interviews, questionnaires and observations through the production and discussion of drawings.

This paper is organized in four sections. The goal of the first section is to review the works of Nel Noddings, who has developed the most extensive and articulate

framework around the concept of caring and its pedagogical values, significantly influencing teacher education programs in the USA and abroad. The second section of this paper will present the methods used in this project and make explicit the researcher's position with regards to the value of images in educational research Section three will report the results of the field-work and section four will present the conclusions of this comparative study.

Nel Noddings and the Pedagogy of Care

Nel Noddings, without doubt one of the most remarkable contemporary educational philosophers, emphasizes caring as a guiding principle for achieving the social and moral purposes of schooling. Caring in this framework provides not only the moral compass but also organizational guidelines for transforming schools in which the emotional, social, and cognitive development are taking into consideration and thus occur in constant interaction. Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton's extensive commentary on Noddings' proposal is useful here:

> [a] caring classroom relationship is part of a "search for competence," and, as it is a relationship, there are two people searching. The student's search is his own discovery of what he knows and how he knows it. The teacher's search—an act of care and respect—is also discovering what the student knows and how he knows it. The teacher expresses caring by searching for the child's competence. Therefore, far from offering automatic approval for whatever knowledge or interpretation the student arrives at, we can say that the teacher co-constructs the child's competence as he searches for it. The relationships between teachers and students and among students shape academic learning, intrapersonal learning, learning about institutions, and learning about the culture. (Oakes & Lipton, 1999: 253)

Nel Noddings (1984; 1991; 1992; 1995; 1999) attempts to challenge the exclusive use of men's experiences as the "normal" model (Gilligan, 1982). Her works have gained considerably prominence among practitioners and researchers alike (Peña and Amrein,

1999). Noddings began by theorizing feminine ways in the field from a perspective that emphasizes relationships, emotions and an *ethic of care*, which is motivated by feelings, and requires also intellectual efforts. [1] As Noddings asserts:

> An ethic of care does not eschew logic and reasoning. When we care, we must employ reasoning to decide what to do and how best to do it. We strive for competence because we want to do our best for those we care for. But reason is not what motivates us. It is feeling with and for the other that motivates us in natural caring (Noddings, 1995: 138).

Caring is a special relationship between two individuals[2] that strives to preserve the uniqueness or "otherness" of the participants. Maintaining the sense of otherness is by implication an acknowledgement of differences and unequal positions of the participants in the relationship. Noddings searches for a balance in the inequalities of these relationships by proposing a fluid alternance between carer and cared-for positions (Noddings, 1992). This alternance is possible because the cared-for will engage in other relationships where she/he will assume the position of the carer. In the concrete case of schools, Noddings' goal is that students be brought into caring practices by the experiences of being cared for and subsequently they will care for others. Even though caring requires "involvement," it is not constrained or limited to the type of romantic involvement that some critics of Noddings fear.[3] As this philosopher states "Feeling is not *all* that is involved in caring, but it is essentially involved" (1984: 32).

Noddings is adamantly clear that the guiding principle of caring is to help others actualize their alterity through the creation of unique narratives arising from the dialogue between the carer and the cared-for. In her model there is a clear recognition that there are collective and social narratives that will shape the dialogue and thus the construction of the individual narratives. However, Noddings notes that "caring is not unconcerned

with individual rights, the common good or community tradition, but it de-emphasizes these concepts and recasts them in terms of relation" (Noddings, 1991: 45).

For Noddings, dialogue is the most fundamental component of the model of care. True dialogue must be open-ended, in the sense that the participants cannot predict the results of it a-priori: "Both speak; both listen. Dialogue is not just conversation. There must be a topic, but the topic may shift, and either party in a dialogue may divert attention from the original topic, to one more crucial, or less sensitive, or more fundamental" (1995: 140).

The creation of these unique narratives through dialogue is perhaps the most problematic and most powerful characteristic of Noddings' caring model. It is problematic because it seems to avoid the constraints and influences that cultural, political, economic, and religious structures have on the construction of the individual narratives, as noted below. It is the most powerful because the goal of creating individual narratives through caring dialogue matches to a large extent the ideals that many teachers profess. In those ideals there is an implicit, yet not automatic, and indeed very problematic promise of change.

Schultz points out that Noddings' conceptualization of caring is a compelling yet not totally successful attempt to avoid the split into individualism and membership of a group. Even though care in this framework is a social practice that encourages the development of identities (or sense of self) in relationships, it is at the same time stripped of its social characteristics and reduced to "unique relationships with multiple others" (1998: 375). It is worth quoting Schultz on this point:

> As we initiate students into the practices of caring, we must also develop with them the skills that we need to respond collectively to oppression, to what

> (Maxine) Green calls the obstacles in the way of our self and collective becoming. Failing to engage in practices of the "public" with our students even though these are practices that require a shift away from the engrossment of caring, represents, paradoxically, a failure on some level to *care* for them and their futures in an often unforgiving world. (1998: 392-93)

Noddings' work has been harshly criticized even to the point of caricaturizing caring as being a "warm fuzzy and touchy-feely" approach to serious and urgent problems.[4] Besides being very poor readings of Noddings highly complex writings, these criticisms have not advanced a better understanding of caring, particularly in light of the strong influence that this concept has on the articulation of teachers' pedagogical imaginations. What follows will attend to both the criticisms and possibilities opened by this approach.

First, in Noddings model there is a risk of reifying caring. This risk arises because there is a lack of recognition of the possibility that "caring" can be constructed (mostly by women) as a strategic response to oppressive, changing and restrictive environments. In other words, historical and anthropological studies have given very powerful evidence that the maternal model of caring that Noddings uses as support for the natural origin of the feminine caring is neither universal nor eternal. Notwithstanding these critical notes, authors such as Barbara Applebaum have maintained that perhaps one of the reasons why so many women are so affirmatively oriented to be or exhibit dispositions to care despite the oppressive characteristics of the systems of feminine caring in modern societies is by virtue of the intrinsic goodness of caring. Applebaum's thoughts about this complicated issue are worth to quote at length:

> If true, this claim would partially explain how women are tempted into playing a role in their own oppression. This insight may also assist women in developing criteria for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate caring. Thus, having an intrinsic notion of the goodness of caring may help the oppressed recognize how

> they get caught up with supporting their own oppression and may even facilitate their doing something about it. Once we acknowledge the gendered construction of caring, the question to ask is, "Is women's caring good because women are socialized to believe it is good or is caring really valuable?" Without some sort of intrinsic notion of the goodness of caring, it hardly makes sense to even ask this question. (Applebaum, 1998: 5)

What needs to be stressed is that I am not contending that caring is not valuable in itself, but it is necessary to recognize that in contemporary discourses about reforming schools feminine caring appears in contraposition to other –supposedly- more professional ways of teaching, historically associated to masculinity (more about this later).

Noddings model of caring is partly based on maternal analogies which are also frequently used by kindergarten, and elementary school teachers. Part of these analogies can be traced historically. According to Silvia Yannoulas (1996) who has studied the origins of teacher training in Argentina and Brazil, the concept of the mother-teacher was initially developed by Pestalozzi (1746-1824) and later perfected by his disciple Herbert Froebel. Froebel's championing for pre-school education (kindergartens) was based on what this German pedagogue defined as the natural tendency of women to act as spiritual mothers.

In Noddings proposal there is an implicit agreement with Foebbel's positions regarding the importance of care in the life of a student, and in both cases the best care is the one modeled by good mother-like figures; and with the implicit assumption that mothers are naturally good loving figures. Noddings would argue that the quality of the caring relationship depends on the type of care that the mother received when she was a child. My objection to this argument is that it assumes that whatever influences the child

was exposed to are going to be exactly replicated later. I am not claiming that early socialization is not a powerful influence, but that there is no script that allows for these predictions.

Another problematic aspect of this model of caring and one that seems to be embraced wholeheartedly by teachers is the exclusive focus on two individuals in isolation. Noddings is not advocating for a child-centered pedagogy nor a teacher-centered model. Indeed, what appears to happen in this model is a free exchange of self-regulating individuals who are exempted and do not participate in relationships of power.

In this sense, Noddings does not address the fact that this model fits into the requirements of governamentality of the modern state with its requirement of establishing an impossible fiction in which we are the free rational subjects competing in the also perfect free market (Foucault, 1993; Hunter, 1994; Popkewitz, 1998). It seems clear that in Noddings' conceptualization the state has no influence, the market does not exert any pressure, racial tensions are non-existent, and classrooms are not workplaces.

Caring has a genealogy, which arouses in the public –and often in some teachers-- sets of expectations: abnegation, altruism, and lack of economic recognition. Grumet (1988) describes these expectations as follows:

> For those who sustain the emotional and physical lives of others, there is no time out, no short week, no sabbatical, no layoff ... even though we secretly respect this maternal pedagogy of ours, it seems personal to us, not quite defensible in this public place, and we provide this nurturant labor without demanding the recompense it deserves (Grumet, 1988: 86-87).

Again, the fact that caring as a disposition or even as a pedagogy (as in Noddings) has had multiple historical readings does not necessarily imply that teachers should perform, accept or celebrate the legacy of oppression found in some conceptualizations of

caring. The key point is that we cannot propose a pedagogy centered on caring, without being aware of the risks it entails.

Grumet's words help us in understanding that when caring is performed with the exclusive focus on the quality of the relationship between two individuals (in most cases involving a female teacher and a student) such connection or relatedness appears as a natural given. In this model, relatedness is mostly, yet not exclusively, part of women's domain which is regarded as gifted because of its moral significance and altruism.

Ultimately, the danger in valuing caring without consideration of the economic, political, and historical context of practices of caring breeds a highly compromised professional model for teachers. This "caring teacher" is expected to perform by the doubtful standards of an impoverished sense of moral agency, which is subordinated to a logic of self-abnegation, in order to be recognized as an effective educator.

Finally, this model of caring based on the concept of *true dialogue* also eludes the fact that our conception of "dialogue" is also a social historical construction that expresses not only explicit political, economic, gender, and racial interests, but also in reality responds to less conscious rules. In Noddings' use of the concept of dialogue, her basic premise is that true dialogue only happens between two individuals, and therefore it needs to exclude the interference of symbolic or real others in order to maintain the flow of dialogue.

The next section of this paper will further elaborate on these topics, by exploring the role of caring in the pedagogical imagination of future teachers in Argentina and the USA.

Exploring Pedagogical Imaginations

In order to explore the pedagogical imagination of ten groups of pre-service second year elementary teacher education students, I did weekly classroom's observations for a period of six months (four months in Argentina and two months in the USA), interviewed faculty, administrators, and students, administered a questionnaire to 288 students and conducted ten workshops organized around the use of an interpretive methodology, conducive to the creation of drawings about schools. Even though the complementary characteristic of data collection and interpretation process, given the specific purposes of this paper I will concentrate most of the analysis of the data obtained in the ten workshops.

In each of these workshops an average of 20-25 students participated in activities which lasted for approximately 2 hours. In all cases the workshops were conducted during the students regular schedule. This interpretive workshops were scheduled at the end of the period of field-work observations with each group of teacher education students. This decision was taken in order to assure that the groups of students were familiar and comfortable with the presence of the researcher in the institution. Each workshop was audio-taped and notes were taken by the researcher.

In the workshops I asked seven groups of student-teachers in Argentina (N= 198 students) and three groups in the South West of the USA (N= 90 students) to make drawings about schooling (either depicting a real or ideal situation). As a way to stimulate and facilitate this interpretive process, before making the drawings the students were asked to discussed and identified the characteristics of real and ideal situations related to the process of schooling. This discussion was summarized in the form of two

lists. The first list contained the "characteristics of real schools" and the second the "characteristics of ideal schools." Both lists were noted in a poster/blackboard.

After producing the images each student was asked to write an explanation about his/her production. Once all the students completed the previous tasks, the drawings were shown to the whole group and the explanations were read. Once the whole group was able to familiarize with all the images and their rationales, the collective of students selected one or two images for further analysis. The directions for the selection of these two images were also quite open (Please, select one or two images that you consider best represent the ideas of this group). Those images were subsequently analyzed and discussed in detail with the coordination of the researcher. After the analysis of the drawings was finished, the researcher provided each student with a 30 item open-ended questionnaire.[5]

While the students were working in small groups and producing the drawings, the role of the researcher was as unobtrusive as possible, taking notes and observing the process. During the group discussion, the researcher hung all the images on the blackboard or a wall and asked the students to look at them. The researcher coordinated the whole group discussion, took notes, and recorded the opinions and exchanges between the students.

It is important to state that the workshops devoted to the production of images were used as a complementary tool and not as an isolated effort of obtaining personal narratives. In addition these workshops have offered spaces for reflection for all their participants, while providing new elements related to theoretical debates on issues such

as social reproduction and social change and the connections among personal life, institutional dynamics, and social structures.

The data produced in these workshops were analyzed in two successive and complementary forms. First, all the drawings were coded and grouped according to the presence or absence of specific features such as gender of teachers, gender of students, depictions of particular situations (poverty, violence, boredom, discipline, caring, and so on). Following William J. Mitchell's (1992) reflections about *visual truth*, the presence or absence of specific features was understood as a *representational commitment* to express a specific feature. For Mitchell in the creation of images there are two connected operations:

> Firstly, image-production processes make certain representational commitments: they record certain kinds of things and not others, and they record some kinds of things more completely and accurately than others. These representational commitments determine in a very obvious way the limits of a resulting image's potential uses in an act of communication. . . . Secondly, a picture used in an act of communication must have the correct type of intentional relationship to its subject matter. (In other words, it must be about the right sort of thing.) (Mitchell, 1992: 221)

The second form of analysis of the data, understood the presence of representational commitments as indication of certain quantifiable features, and thus allowing for establishing frequencies of distribution of specific trends (i.e., percentage of female/male in drawings about real teachers). These tendencies, discussed in the next section, constitute part of the "evidence" that this research used in the understanding of the connections of ideas about caring and the teacher education students pedagogical imagination.

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Results

Despite the differences in the educational systems of both countries –which are beyond the scope of this paper-several trends emerged in the analysis of the research materials (drawings, rationales, and focus groups).[6] Among those trends are:

1. Students saw homogenous classrooms in terms of race, ethnicity or group ability as better places than heterogeneous groups. An interesting manifestation of this trend was found in the images about ideal classrooms. For example, 80% of the drawings show homogenous groups as the best possible scenario, while 20% made specific comments about the need to "celebrate diversity" as the marker of an ideal classroom. These tendencies were also registered in many individual interviews and in class discussions.
2. Argentinean and USA pre-service teachers had enormous difficulties imagining alternative spaces for learning (only 10 drawings showed students learning outside schools). In other words, learning always happened in classrooms, with one teacher lecturing or writing on a blackboard and with several students sitting in desks. However, the spatial arrangement of desks in classrooms was the element that appeared as occupying a privileged position in the pedagogical imagination of these future teachers. Overall for both countries 65% of real drawings showed students' seating in rows and 80% of ideal drawings show circular arrangements. The images of student seating in circles seemed to represent, in most of the ideal drawings, non-authoritarian pedagogical practices. Circular arrangements are supposedly a more democratic practice because it counteracts formality, rigidity and it encourages student to student interaction as well as a more dialogical encounter between teachers and students. However, as was clearly observed in many of the "real images," it

appeared that most of the students who sat in rows were able to avoid and resist the teacher's control in direct contradiction to what was often described as "authoritarian classrooms." Ironically, in many of the ideal representations showing circular arrangements, it was the teacher who occupied the center and seemed to control more, not less, of what happened in the classroom. In other words, circle seating appeared as a particular technology, a reified ritual that classified and distinguished good teaching from bad teaching. In the images analyzed here, circular seating was not only a methodological tool but it had also acquired ritualistic features, invested with power and meaning.

3. The pedagogical imagination of these pre-service teacher education students in the two countries seemed also limited in terms of breaking away with the model "one classroom/one teacher." This difficulty was easily recognizable in the images produced by the students. Only three drawings out of 288 showed more than one teacher per classroom (two drawings from the USA). It should be noted that in many cases the students were exposed to philosophies and methodologies emphasizing collaborative learning and teaching, team-teaching, and many of the pre-service students were doing their internships in schools. Thus, these students were in fact collaborating with teachers or saw other adults (special education, teacher-aids, parents, specialists) working in regular classrooms.
4. The majority of both Argentinean and North American pre-service student teachers chose to represent real classrooms as problematic and unpleasant spaces. Classrooms were seen unpleasant for three reasons: A) economic hardships, B) violence and C) students' indifference to school curriculum.

A) In the images produced by Argentinean students, economic hardships were almost equally shared by institutions (schools and classrooms having rat-holes, broken windows, graffiti) and participants (teachers and students having worn out clothes, students receiving school lunch, teachers' salaries being "poor") giving a clear indication of the economic crisis in Argentina and its impact on public education (55% of real images show indications of poverty in schools). In the images of USA schools, teachers and students in public schools were also depicted as facing economic hardship, but, in this case it was always in relative terms. In the images about North American schools, classrooms, students, and teachers also faced economic hardship not in absolute terms but because they did not receive what they deserved by comparison with another group. In other words, classrooms in public schools were worse than in private schools, poor students were less motivated than well-to-do students, and teachers' salaries were low compared with the remuneration of other professionals.

B) A similar number of images about "real classrooms" in both countries (36% Argentina and 40% of the USA) contained clear signs of violence (guns, fights, blood) or lack of discipline.

C) Similarly, approximately 70% of the images about "real classrooms" in both countries depicted students as being unable to follow the lessons, being bored by them, or simply lacking any interest in connecting to what schools had to offer. In some cases, the lack of correspondence between teaching and learning was accompanied by student's defiant attitudes towards teachers and teachers authoritarian stances towards students. Only five images (all produced in the

USA) incorporated elements related to language barriers in teacher-students interactions.

5. Another remarkable coincident trend in the pedagogical imagination of these future teachers in Argentina and the USA was that they saw "real" teachers as undoubtedly White, middle aged women (90% for both countries). It should be noted that some of the images presented these women in a favorable manner in terms of their disposition to teach (as in cases where the female teacher showed concern for the lack of progress of the students or was serving food to students), and in some other cases in an unfavorable light, presenting the woman teacher as a negative character, being authoritarian, screaming at students, or ignoring the students' needs.
6. If real teachers were imagined as being mostly women, the "ideal teacher" was also a female, yet the number of images about male teachers increased quite substantially in the drawings about "ideal situations." More specifically, only 10% of the images about reality depicted male teachers but 30% of the ideal images were of men (30% for Argentina and 32% for the USA).[7] In addition the images, of both male and female ideal teachers depicted younger and more attractive people (following the Western canon of beauty) than the "real" ones.
7. Perhaps the most striking trend, and one that indicates the importance of gender dynamics in teacher education was that approximately 60% of the ideal drawings for both countries contained explicit references to "caring" teachers, attitudes, and classrooms (very often in the explanation of the drawings). In addition, in eight out of nine workshops the students selected for further analysis drawings that depicted images of "caring teachers" and/or caring classrooms as their ideal model. At first

glance, some basic aspects of caring were shared by student-teachers in both countries. Nevertheless, this researcher has found that caring has also distinctive features for both groups.

See for instance figures 1, 2, and 3 produced by Argentinean students and compare them with figures 4, 5, and 6 produced by North American students. The drawings produced by Argentinean students show that teachers and students bodies are in contact, and the situations are pleasant and indicative of "caring exchanges" between female adults and children.

Image #1: Caring 1

Image #1 was produced by a 21 female students. Her rationale for producing this drawing was: a happy teacher, open to dialogue and new proposals. CARING AND AFFECTIONATE. Respectful of the children needs and makes other respect her (capitalized in the original).

Image #2: Caring 2

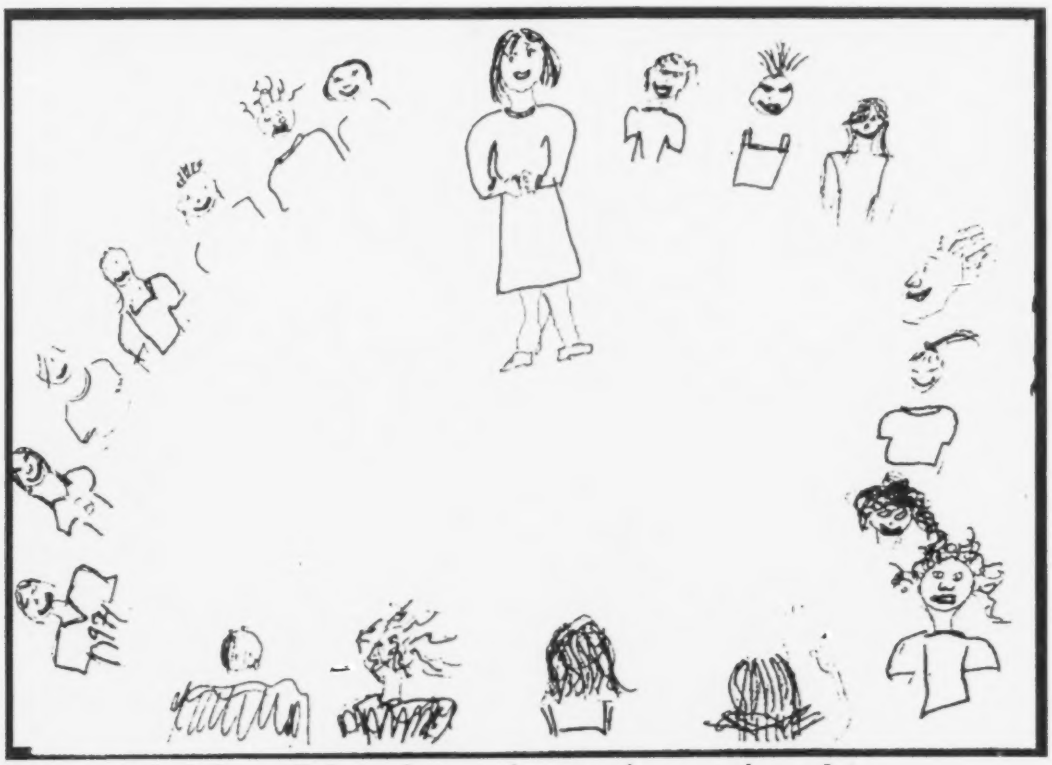
Image # 2 was drawn by a 29 year-old female student. Her rationale states that: Teaching is above all, caring for our students. Being patient and loving is the key to a great classroom.

Image #3: "Ear"

The "Ear" was drawn by a 33 year-old female student. Her rationale for this picture is: Ideal situation, in my opinion, is that in which education finds support and there are opportunities for the wonderful minds to grow and blossom wider day by day. Even though financial support is important, more would be achieved with effort and much passion to see the fantastic working minds.

The next figures (4, 5, and 6) produced by North American students depict the same topics, yet they are in sharp contrast with regards to what is the use of the body as represented by the Argentinean drawings. In the USA images, teachers and children's bodies were not in contact. The only time there is a bodily contact (image 6) it is depicted as a violent episode and it does not involve a teacher but a male student mistreating a female student.

Image #4: Cooperative Learning

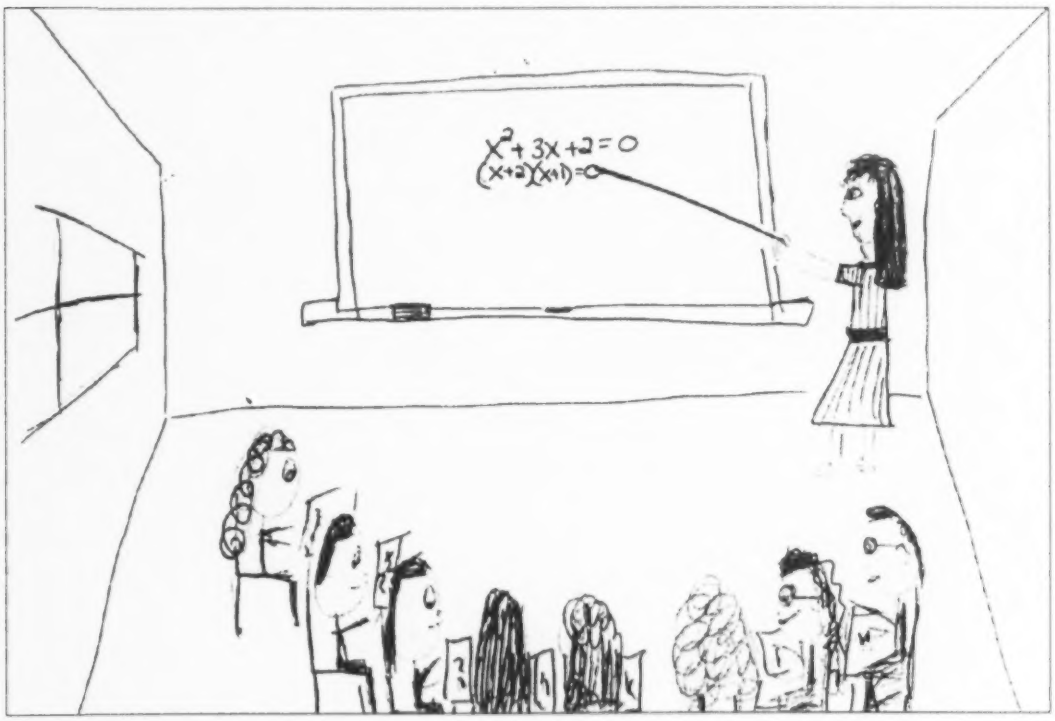


This is my ideal class. All the students are happy and eager to learn. It is a diverse group in terms of ethnicity, race and gender. We work as a team, cooperating in order to learn

Image#5:

The author of this image is a white, 20 years old student. Her rationale for this image was: *Students ready and willing to learn*

They never ask the question "when are we going to use this?" during a math lesson (or any other lesson). (underlying in the original)



Image#6

Created by a 21 years old female student, Image # 6 has the following rationale

I drew the real side looking so out of control as an exaggeration of how classrooms <u>*can*</u> *be. On the ideal side, the teacher is happy and all is calm, beautiful and well.* (underlying in the original)

Before concentrating on the analysis of caring as a key organizing concept of the pedagogical imagination of these future teachers, I want to highlight that this small sample of drawings shows another salient difference between Argentinean and USA students. In the images produced by Argentinean students, there are almost no exchanges around traditional markers of learning (books, notebooks, etc.), while in the North American case the presence of those elements is quite evident.

However, I would like to warn the reader against interpreting the absence of traditional markers of school activities (maps, notebooks, text-books, computers, etc.) as a lack of concern for intellectual development among Argentinean students. The fact that most Argentinean students expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with the structural conditions of schools (crumbling buildings, rat holes, broken windows, graffiti on walls, and the like) may very well indicate that their perception of the most urgent needs is very different than that of the USA students.

Returning to the centrality of caring in the pedagogical imagination. I would like to begin by noting that South and North American students agreed with several of Noddings's points. In particular, these students imagined caring as a "disposition" a particular orientation of the teacher with regards his/her students, in which feelings are very important.

Whereas caring as a "disposition" appears as a common element in the pedagogical imagination in the two countries, caring as "actions" is the distinctive factor. Similarities in the ideal caring classroom include the quality of peacefulness, participation, qualities that appeared as dependant of the construction of caring classrooms. Clearly , these students also mentioned and represented other factors (better

economic conditions was also strongly noted) however, caring was imagined as easier to control and as almost an all-powerful approach for solving some of the most pressing problems assaulting real classrooms.

What constitutes the difference between caring as a disposition and caring as an action, is the incorporation or not of physical involvement between teachers and students. More specifically, in Argentina caring cannot be imagined without physical involvement, and in all cases it involved a female teacher with young students, in the USA caring is also performed predominantly by women but excluding physical contact. In Argentina the depiction of teachers and students' bodies allowed to some of these future teachers to see the physical body as a "pedagogical tool," apt to express emotional caring, in the USA caring must exclude the body and instead translate into an intellectual and emotional disposition.

An important point to stress at this time is that these bodily dynamics are clearly **visible** in the drawings produced by students and were also brought up during the workshops, but were not as apparent in interviews or written responses. At this point I would like to clarify that these two manifestations of caring do not by any means imply that one is better, more effective, or more caring than the other. There is no doubt that quality and intensity of caring are present in both countries alike, and that the involvement or lack of involvement of the physical body is part of the regime of truth (Foucault, 1970) in each country regulating the use and discipline of the body as well as cultural standards and mores.

In the case of the USA, the exclusion of the body may also be influenced by the historical connections (specially in K-8) of teaching with women, and more recently with

the proposals aimed at "professionalising" teaching. What needs to be considered is that if care has been historically associated with feminine ideals, the image of being a "professional" has been historically associated with masculine ideals.

It is also important to note that the North American future teachers were extremely concerned about issues of sexual harassment and child abuse in schools. However, despite the legal and disciplinary implications involved in the definition of what constitutes harassment, this last characteristic was recurrently asserted by North American students as associated with excesses of caring only in reference to male teachers. The following statements produced during a focus group discussion with North American students illustrate this point:

> J (male student 28 years old): Care is very important, but with limits, especially with men…I don't want to have a sexual harassment lawsuit for caring too much.
>
> A (female student 23 years old): I cannot imagine a good teacher who doesn't care for her students, but, you know, … care for a student means to respect the student's ideas and emotions, without being touchy feely. I hate when teachers are very friendly and try to hug students …Do you know what I mean, don't you?

In contrast in Argentina the students frequently mentioned and expressed in their drawings the importance of hugs and touching the bodies of the students as an important way to reach them:

> P (female student, 22 years old): I know that the most effective way of showing that you really care is by playing with my kids; hugging them is as important as grading their homework. You have to have a personal relationship…a close one; if not they think that you don't care.
>
> C (male student, 23 years old): I think that there is nothing more important for poor kids than to show that you love them, that you want to make a difference, that you can teach math, play soccer, yell at them when they go crazy and also care for them and comfort them when they are sad, hungry, or mad. I know…it worked for me.

The evidence revealed through the images and words indicates the importance of reconsidering stereotypical models of gender in teacher education, and especially in relationship to the image of teachers as a-sexual, disembodied professionals. Moreover, as Nadeau (1993) and many others have noted, in order to imagine a different educational future, it is important to incorporate the multifaceted dimensions of emotions, bodies, and feelings because:

> [A]voiding the emotional body and the unpredictable territory of play robs us of valuable information. Ultimately, neither feeling nor thinking understanding alone will take us far towards re-imagining and realizing a different world (Nadeau, 1993: 157-8)

The distinctive conceptualization of caring actions in relationship with the expressive use (or not) of the body found in the images and words of Argentineans and North American students could be explained to a large extent by the ubiquitous resource of national and cultural differences. For some, the stereotypical prudishness of the tradition of Puritanism and its restraints with regards to using the body to express emotions against the assumed more demonstrative Latin heritage could be the explanatory key in this case.

However, I would warn against those over-encompassing culturalist arguments that assumed a uniform "national identity" based on the hegemonic position of one sector of the population. In other words, not all Argentineans have their roots in Spanish or Italian immigrants, share a Latino heritage, and worship the same God, nor all North-American found their source of identity in the WASP traditions. Whatever the manifestations of caring, what is important to highlight is that caring as a construct is an extremely complex one rightly expressed by different groups in diverse ways. In order to

understand the dynamics, possibilities, and challenges of postulating caring as the organizer of central value of pedagogical models, it is imperative to pay attention to gender, racial, and class formations. It is important not to measure one way against another least we minimize the intent and quality of caring intended by teachers.

If anything, the pedagogical imagination about caring presented by these students seems to be highly influenced by conflicting goals, pressing realities, and the proliferation of more and more demands placed upon teachers.

Conclusions

In this section I will argue that in order to understand the pedagogical imagination of elementary teacher education students in Argentina and the USA, we have to see its manifestations as informed by and informing the new financial and technological bases of capitalist production; its global developments, the new cultural maps; the changing class, racial, and gender patterns of production, consumption, discrimination and exploitation.

Understanding the pedagogical imagination as both informing and being informed by other social dynamics, also requires to recognize its intimate connections with the world of schooling. I want to highlight that pedagogical imaginations participate in shaping the dynamics that configure classrooms not only in the traditional understanding of being educational and cultural spaces but also as being working spaces.

Schools and classrooms are workplaces, thus, teachers are employees who produce and consume for the local economy, students are mostly consumers and will be workers (except those who have the dual role of being students and employees), and most parents are also workers.

The key assumption of this research is that classrooms are gendered workplaces, and that more often than not, gender dynamics play a pivotal role in the pedagogical imagination of teachers, administrators and students. The claim that schools and teacher education programs are gendered spaces does not imply that gender dynamics over-determine relationships of class or race, but points to the particular importance of gender in the process of preparing teachers for their work in classrooms and schools.

Robert Connell (1996) argues that in the configuration of an educational institution's *gender regime* there is a relatively open-ended interaction among relationships of power, labor division, emotions and meanings. In other words, schools actively create and control their own gender regimes within the confining boundaries of the larger cultural, political, economic, and religious structures. Each regime allows for the creation, recreation, and repression of femininities and masculinities, and in so doing it also delimits the institutional structure of opportunities, rewards, and punishments embedded in the daily tasks of schools, thus extending the influence of this regime beyond institutional walls (Connell, 1995).

Connell (1996) points out that gender regimes do not have to be internally coherent or immutable structures. They are presented as "impersonal social facts," and teachers and students participate in gender regimes in variable and active terms. Students actively use these spaces, assuming and constructing gendered identities that cannot be pre-determined. More precisely, students may end up constructing identities that do not follow the apparently precise script that parents and teachers may have intentionally created. However, there are masculinities and femininities that occupy the top positions in the normalizing hierarchy of a school's gender regime (Connell, 1995 and 1996).

Some boys and some girls perform their gender identities in ways closer to the imagined "normal" behaviors. These patterns are sustained by a broad spectrum of social and school-based practices, chief among them, is the sustainability of an imagined school population that is entirely heterosexual, has a "normal family" (mother, father, siblings), and conforms to the hegemonic rules of society.

Another way in which schools operate as gender regimes can be seen in how classrooms in particular adapt characteristics of both public and domestic arenas within the framework of the more general gender order of a given society. This mimicking and extension of home-like arrangements into schools is exemplified in the historical development of systems of administration of public systems of education. In both Argentina and the USA, the administration of educational institutions has followed the modernizing paradigms in which the bureaucratic organization of schools was postulated as of paramount importance.

Schools as "modern" institutions are still embracing the goals of bureaucratic organization, rationality, neutrality, explicit and impersonal norms. This rationale predicts that schools will operate efficiently, providing transparency and equal opportunities for all. The strong connections of this model and its stated goals with a gender regime that privileges patriarchal structures and rewards hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities, are well known (Ferguson, 1984; Stromquist 1993 and 1996).[8]

Both in Europe and the Americas, during the development of public school systems of in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries women entered massively in teaching positions.[9] The economic, political, and ideological reasons for this

phenomenon are beyond the scope of this paper, but we should bear in mind that this entrance was in many cases framed within the tradition of the mother-teacher. At the same time, it was established that "teaching is not managing" (Morgade, 1993, 1995 and 1997). Consequently, women teachers were not supposed to pursue positions of leadership and the model of "teaching as caring" gained considerably strength.[10]

In a parallel procedure, men were regarded as better administrators and moved into the upper echelons of the administration, satisfying the functions that the patriarchal system reserved for them. They embodied the notions of the bureaucratic model, as the "natural" warrantors of discipline and order. Jill Blackmore (1994, 1995) points out to three strong masculine images that were pervasive throughout the development of educational organizations: the patriarch, the bureaucrat and the manager.

Today, the ideal school administrator appears closely connected to the figure of the multi-skilled manager who is able to lead teams, manage ever shrinking budgets, set standards, apt for negotiating conflicts and making tough choices. Schools are complex organizations in increasingly more complex communities. These communities are accustomed to see men in control and thus they also expect to see men as principals or administrators. Common beliefs about the practical reasoning, objectivity, stronger sense of discipline of men are also intervening factors. Even the concept of making a career is crossed by gender considerations (Acker 1992 and 1996).

Sari Knopp Biklen's (1995) study of elementary school teachers describes how unappealing the concept of the "administration career" for women teachers was because administrative positions were seen as bureaucratic posts, without real decision making power, far away from their main interests -the children- and related more to discipline

than to teaching. As discussed previously, authority and decision-making are frequently conceptualized as connected to stereotypically "masculine" features involving domination and violence. In general terms, if a woman wants to move up, out of the semi-public space of the classroom, she is usually perceived as being too ambitious, or not caring enough for the children, and this is not ethical for women.[11]

The results of this research project are congruent with Sandra Acker, Robert W. Connell and Sari Biklen's positions. It appears that despite the differences with regards to the use of the body, many future teachers in both countries imagine ideal classrooms in familiar patterns and style as the real ones: One female teacher, several students (preferably of the same class, ethnic, and racial background), some books, a blackboard, desks and chairs, and no interference by external pressures (as diverse as parents, politicians, the world, poverty, or racism).

Perhaps the only real noticeable break with "real" classrooms is the persistent use of circular seating instead of the traditional lines and rows as the magic marker of ideal classrooms. These are familiar patterns, with actors playing familiar roles in a well known stage have a strong resonance to a 1950s sitcom. In this family-comedy-soap-opera the roles are well defined, almost, but not exactly mimicking the borders of the domestic kingdom where the good and bad students are easily discernible, and good and caring teachers always get a big, juicy red apple.

What these students could not incorporate into their pedagogical imaginations, or at least critically incorporate (and this is the challenge for teacher educators), is that classrooms may resemble the domestic arena, yet they are not. Classrooms are border-like institutions, they are semi-private and semi-public spaces, isolated as well as

connected and scrutinized by parents, policy-makers, researchers, and the media, and the vigilant structures of school administration.

Granted, the discourses analyzed in this research, pictorial, written and spoken, are not homogenous constructions. Indeed, they have internal contradictions and incorporate competing messages. Nevertheless, most of these students imagine an ideal classroom, through images of order and tight control within the stereotypical feminine and masculine models hegemonic in each society.

This research has found evidence to suggest that the ideal classroom imagined by teacher education students is mainly a response to their diagnosis of current classrooms as chaotic spaces deeply embedded in gender dynamics. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons which explains the increase of "male teachers" in the description of ideal classrooms given the close association that the TEP students have manifested between discipline and masculinity.

Despite the differences noted in section three, this paper argues that the notions of "caring" derived from Noddings's framework are conceptually and practically very close to the functions of caring in the pedagogical imagination of teacher education students in Argentina and the USA. For both students and Noddings, the concept of caring has important premises and promises for the re-organization of schools. I for one, would like to believe that the premises are right and that the promises will be fulfilled. However, I remain skeptical. My skepticism should not be mistaken with a call for a complete dismissal the notion of caring. On the contrary, I propose to understand caring in its specific local manifestations and specially as an important signifier of the pedagogical imagination of future elementary education teachers. If anything the pedagogical

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imagination about caring presented by these students seems to be highly influenced by the hegemonic gender regime of schools, conflicting goals, pressing realities, and the proliferation of more and more demands placed upon teachers.

At the same time, when concepts of *caring* and *authority* are not redefined and critically analyzed they become part of complex mechanisms supporting structures of career discrimination, thus, contributing to the impoverishment of the professional situation of the teaching workforce as a whole. Moreover, uncritical acceptance --or its counterpart, uncritical dismissing-- of caring and authority, especially as they relate to teacher education, represent an important and urgent challenge to our imagination not only as educators, but also as citizens. I would like to say that each of these images and words these students have offered may have very distinct implications for their future performance. Understanding them is undoubtedly an important challenge for researchers and teacher educators. I hope to have made a small contribution towards this goal.

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[1] Regarding the use of the notion of the term "feminine" Noddings positions herself with clarity. She comments that her understanding of feminine is in the classical sense of the term and it does not refer to any feminine essence shared by all woman. Noddings points out that if particular approaches or expressions (such as to begin searching for answers to a problem from a moral perspective) are more commonly used by women than men is a matter of empirical investigation and she does not want to pursue that road (Noddings, 1991; 1992).

[2] Noddings is clear that this is a relationship between 2 individuals and it is impossible to bring more than a single cared-for into it. In that sense, she points out that we cannot care for whole groups but only for individuals and only one at a time (Schultz, 1998: 384).

[3] Noddings continuously asserts that care implies a permanent search for social and scientific competence challenging students with questions that are at the core of human existence. Therefore, caring in the classroom will have implications beyond the realm of schools. Caring must provide the opportunities for students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make a positive contribution in whatever field of study or work they might choose.

[4] Noddings does not avoid to engage the topics of inequalities and oppression. However, she expresses that in the caring relationship the participants are in a context that is not equal to the culture of a group, its gender and racial relationships and class inequalities, but in context, created by the personal narratives that the carer and the cared-for have developed within and beyond the larger social narratives.

[5] The questionnaires focused on the following areas: (a) students' social, ethnic, economic and cultural backgrounds; (b) students' decisions to become teachers; (c) students' opinions and expectations about salaries, labor conditions, and occupational futures, and (d) students' metaphors for the teaching profession.

[6] For a more detailed explanation about the organization of teacher education in Argentina see Fischman (2000).

[7] Those drawings that made explicit references to the non-relevant gendered distinctions of either real or ideal images were not included.

[7] In this framework, bureaucracy is not only a rational structure, it is also a physical structure of power, whereas the higher the person ascends in the bureaucratic structure, he (more often than she) has more formal authority. Even in more contemporaneous discourses about organizations that appear to challenge traditional hierarchical structures, there is an insistent promotion of emotionally neutral leadership in order to secure objective decision making processes

[8] The massive entrance of women requires some qualification. As previously discussed, not all women have the same experiences and possibilities and in order to understand the dynamics of gender it is imperative to pay attention to race, and class formation (Hill Colins, 1990). What follows is a large an thorough passage of Jacqueline Jones (1995) in reference to the difficulties of black women to access schools. Her comments are a good example of the need to not obliterate differences or essentialize "women experiences" while analyzing the topic of the feminization of teaching: "By the early twentieth century, the small black public teaching force had been feminized; at the national level, women in the profession outnumbered men by a ratio of above five to one. This ratio was true for the North as well for the South, though the number of black women involved rarely totaled more than a handful in any area. In Chicago in 1929, for example, there were only 134 black female teachers. It is difficult to generalize about these teachers, though they were probably young, single, confined to the lowers grades and paid less than whites performing the same jobs. As black school attendance and political power gradually increased in neighborhoods like Harlem and Chicago South Side, a few black teachers were appointed by a highly politicized citywide school board. Still, most of these positions in predominantly black schools would continue to go to white teachers, who show little sensitivity to the special needs of their students and quickly label them inferior in mental aptitude." (Jones, 1995: 180)

[9] This limited participation in positions of leadership was also extensive to women's participation in the teacher's union. See among others Bonder, 1992; Braslavsky, 1992; Cortina, 1992; and Hernández, 1997.

[10] A similar point should be made regarding gay and lesbian teachers. In this case, they are a-priori perceived as unethical beings ill suited to pursue positions of leadership. The use of time is also a significant conditionality to women teachers' involvement in positions of leadership (Acker, 1994 and 1996). Under traditional family and institutional arrangements, many women, as both teachers and mothers/wives, have found little time for the extended school meetings and other time-consuming practices required in those positions of authority. Despite these constraints women have been increasing their numbers in leadership positions.